

FINANCIAL NEWS AND COMMENT

The Rising Movement in Prices Assumes Much Greater Breadth and Activity.

SPRING WEATHER HELPS

Steel Common Again Very Strong—Commercial Agencies Report Better Business.

The rise in the price of stocks which at the close of business on Thursday afternoon had plainly gained something more than the usual spring rally was continued yesterday from the very opening of the Stock Exchange with greater buoyancy than has been seen at any time since the upward movement began over a month since. The feature of the advance was that there were no features. The rise was practically uniform and did not appear to be based in any particular upon special developments in the news. The announcement over the holiday of a receivership for the Pere Marquette Railroad was not regarded at all nor should it have been inasmuch as it was of merely technical character. Speculation was checked by the continued reports of business improvement, by the great increases shown in bank clearings and more than anything else by the prevalence of warm spring weather all over the country. There were no reactions in prices during the day and the close was at the highest prices. The bank statement was chiefly interesting because of the fact that in the actual form of the return a great decrease in loans occurred which caused an enlargement of the bank surplus. It appeared to be the sentiment in banking quarters that although somewhat higher rates for money might be looked for during the spring yet that the spurt in rates witnessed last week was of a purely temporary character caused by the operation of factors incident to the April settlements in all the world's financial capitals.

Despite the advance in the stock market there were no very sensational or striking developments in last week's financial news and the chief feature of interest in Wall Street was the mere upward surge of the security market itself proceeding from its own inherent momentum. Railroad earnings for the month of February as they were published were very favorable even if they had to be construed in the light of the fact that there was an extra day in February and that the business over certain lines was unwontedly large owing to preparations for an expected coal strike. And yet during the month when railroad traffic was impeded by storms and cold weather the improvement in business was such that the Pennsylvania could increase its gross earnings on all its lines \$3,471,000 and its net \$1,094,000 and the New York Central could increase its gross \$1,881,000 and its net \$1,116,000, a pretty impressive proof of the vitality of the business of the country was picking up.

This has also been corroborated by the record of bank clearings for March just compiled which, according to *Brooklyn*, was 12.1 per cent. over February and 7.6 per cent. over March, 1911. Indeed bank clearings in March were the heaviest in any month with two exceptions since March, 1910. From almost every trade quarter comes a story of improvement and a desire to do business even if this is more pronounced in some trades than in others, and details aside, it is quite apparent that the whole business community is just now becoming animated with a degree of hopefulness and optimism which is in vivid contrast with the despondency that characterized the popular temper as recently as six months since. There appears to be little disposition in Wall Street to dwell upon the demands of the engineers on the Eastern railway lines for more pay, because it is practically conceded that these demands will be submitted to arbitration if an agreement between the engineers and their employers cannot be reached.

Throughout last week the British coal strike was, so far as our own security market was concerned, a matter of ancient history, and while some of the newspapers have been trying to get up a scare over the prospect of an anthracite strike here, it is still the consensus that the current suspension of coal mining will not last much longer. Likewise, stories of damage by the floods in the West and a consequent interference with railway traffic did not induce any pessimist at all in the financial district, partially because it has been this time again demonstrated that such and of water at this season of the year is of inconceivable benefit to the crops.

There can be no doubt, on the other hand, that distinct optimism was engendered by the publication of the figures of increased pig iron production for March, accompanied by a manifestly higher trend in the price of the commodity. It is commonly expected in Wall Street that the financial statement of the Steel Corporation toward the first quarter of the year will be poor, and also owing to the enlarged deliveries from the steel mills that the record of unfilled orders in the books of the corporation at the end of March when it is published will show a considerable decrease. Nevertheless the brighter outlook for the industry resulted in a considerable advance during the week in the quotations for the United States Steel shares. A question of some interest to the stock market and to all business concerns as well is likely to be the course of money rates from now on. Demands for the use of money in general business are increasing, and the applications of the Western farmers for funds for seed and for agricultural purposes, which have been delayed on account of the backwardness of spring, are also becoming active. As our bank reserves are comparatively low owing to the free extension of credit for two years back to Germany and other foreign borrowers it is reasonably certain that money can no longer be had by anybody at the nominal charge for the time being. It is long prevalent, but whether this alone will suffice to moderate the more cheerful mood of the stock market is rather doubtful.

Imports of General Merchandise and Dry Goods.

Goods.		
Imports of dry goods and general merchandise at New York for the week ending March 30, 1912, as reported in full at the Custom House, compare as follows with last year:		
	Week, March 19, 1911.	1911.
Dry goods	\$1,211,023	\$1,458,411
General merchandise	19,741,225	17,477,906
Total	\$21,113,248	\$19,088,317
From Japan	5,112,278	\$42,015,000
Dry goods	5,112,278	\$42,015,000
General merchandise	19,741,225	17,477,906
Total	\$24,853,503	\$22,500,000